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Let's Get The Signals Straight

The Cuban invasion fiasco has brought the U.S. intelligence system to the forefront of national attention. It is not a new source of concern. Even allowing for the difficulties of getting reliable information in Communist dominated countries, even granting that sometimes the right information has been wrongly interpreted or ignored in higher councils, there has been too much evidence that the nation has been misinformed when it desperately needed to be well informed. What happened recently in Cuba has put the U.S. in a mess that has prompted a full-scale administration inquiry into the intelligence process.

Without prejudging the Central Intelligence Agency, or the score of government agencies that collect foreign data and work closely with CIA, something is wrong. The fault may lie in one or more of several Achilles' heels — infiltration, an amateur policy-making bent, the pitfalls of a co-ordination maze, or

plain bamboozling by superior counter-intelligence of a potential enemy. Whatever the weaknesses are, they need to be found and removed.

Apparently the U.S. information could hardly have been worse than it was on the Cuban situation. We seem not to have known the extent of the armament built up for Castro by the Reds, nor to have had a true estimate of what it would take to bring substantial defections against him among the Cuban populace. Yet, based on the information we had, U.S. prestige was put on the line. It was a flop that the nation can't afford to repeat.

The bulk of our intelligence system personnel may be both loyal and expert. The system itself may have been carefully devised. But the proof is still in the nation's knowing the facts—for sure and in advance. The best national policy in the world can't get to first base if the signals are crossed up.